Written submission from William Queen

Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communication (Scotland) Bill

I write to you with regard to the proposed legislation Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Bill.

I can understand the need to introduce some legislation with regard to the online abuse of certain individuals during the last football season, there is a need to prevent people hiding behind a computer and spilling out there vile all across the world.

But I see no need for the rest of the bill as it seems that existing laws are enough to deal with the behaviour of those who use football as a way of expressing their hatred. It has become clear over the last few days that this part of the bill is clearly unworkable. Neither the police nor the minister could be clear on what would constitute committing an offence under this part of the act. A senior police officer said he could not define which songs would constitute committing an offence under the act. The minister said at committee that making the sign of the cross could constitute an offence if Celtic and Rangers supporters met in the street.

If a senior policeman and the minister cannot say how people would be deemed to have committed an offence, how will the police on the ground decide who is committing such an offence.

This bill is being rushed through parliament at breakneck speed for no good reason and needs to be slowed down and thought through properly. As a Rangers supporter I want to see sectarianism banished from our nation but this is not the answer, a well thought out law may help eradicate some online abuse but this law will do nothing to prevent it.

William Queen
21 June 2011